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Congress of the United States
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0272
Broadband /
USF
WCB

February 14, 2011

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th St. SW
Washington DC 20554

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to share concerns about the National Broadband Plan (NBP). While I applaud the goal that you have set for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to ensure that every American has affordable access to robust broadband service, I am concerned that the goals of the plan will be achieved in a manner that will negatively impact rural communities.

28 FEB 2011 RCVD

The NBP did an excellent job analyzing and contemplating the great social and economic benefits that broadband access brings—including increased educational and employment opportunity, improved health care, and greater energy efficiency. The benefits of broadband access are just as vital to rural communities as they are to densely populated urban areas. The district I represent in Wisconsin is heavily rural and relies on the Universal Service Fund (USF) to provide affordable telecommunications services to residents.

A major component of the NBP is reforming the USF. As the FCC moves forward with specific reforms, I urge you to ensure rural telecommunication providers that rely on the USF can continue to do so. For example, some providers that use the USF in my district are already able to provide 4 megabits per second (Mbps) broadband connectivity to customers. I share their concern that when the USF is reformed, they may no longer have access to the funding because the FCC will consider the area as already meeting the goals of the NBP. As you know, broadband technology is constantly changing and rural communities need consistent funding to ensure they are able to provide the best broadband service possible. This is the only way we can ensure that rural, expensive, and hard to reach areas have access to affordable broadband services moving forward.

Many people and small businesses in my district are concerned that some of the proposals in the NBP have the potential to increase the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Notably, while trumpeting the benefits of broadband at 100 Mbps for 100 million homes, the NBP also moves to transition the USF to support broadband offerings at 4 Mbps. Establishing such a low bar for rural residents and businesses relegates them to second class broadband capacity. It hinders their ability to

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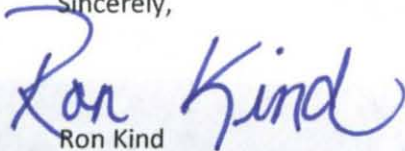
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share in the transformative vision for broadband outlined in the NBP and makes it very difficult to compete in the technology driven global economy.

Rural Americans and businesses are understandably concerned about the impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive comparable and affordable broadband service. I urge you to seriously consider these concerns as you implement the plan's recommendations and take the appropriate steps to ensure all Americans play a role in, and benefit from, the promise of broadband.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Kind". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The "R" is large and loops around the "on". The "Kind" is written in a similar cursive style.

Ron Kind

Member of Congress



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

April 26, 2011

JULIUS GENACHOWSKI
CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Ron Kind
U.S. House of Representatives
1406 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kind:

Thank you for your letter concerning various aspects of the National Broadband Plan (NBP), including Universal Service Fund (USF) reform, and the proposed benchmark broadband speed of 4 Mbps for public funding of broadband.

As a number of stakeholders – including members of Congress from rural areas – have acknowledged, Universal Service Fund is broken. USF was designed for a 20th century world and is still focused on supporting voice networks, not 21st century broadband networks, at a time when tens of millions of Americans lack access to basic broadband services. USF rules are also contributing to a rural-rural divide: Some areas of rural America have succeeded in deploying robust broadband with significant USF support. Other areas, including areas in states like Wisconsin that are immediately adjacent to well-served areas are getting little or no USF support and have no broadband at all.

This February, the Commission took a significant step in our efforts to get broadband to all of rural America by adopting a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* on USF and Intercarrier Compensation (ICC) reform. This proceeding proposes to modernize the intertwined USF and ICC systems by eliminating waste and inefficiency and reorienting the systems to meet the nation's broadband challenge.

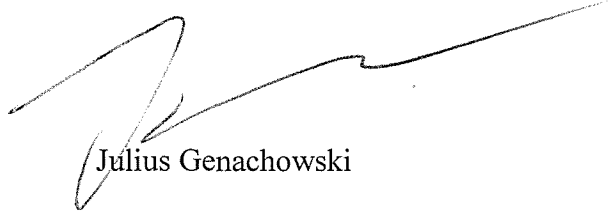
The Commission's reform efforts strive to ensure accountability and fiscal responsibility by controlling costs and constraining the size of USF, while using market-driven and incentive-based policies to maximize the impact of scarce program resources. Through savings realized from reforms, we can begin transitioning funding to the Connect America Fund, which will directly support broadband for unserved Americans.

Be assured that I am committed to making broadband affordable and attainable by all Americans, regardless of where they live or which service providers they use. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as the Commission transforms its universal service policies to close the digital divide in our nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I

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can be of further assistance. Your letter will be included in the record of the USF reform proceeding.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julius Genachowski', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Julius Genachowski